

VZCZCXYZ0027
OO RUEHWEB

DE RUEHNR #2616/01 1651351
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 141351Z JUN 06
FM AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2444
INFO RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA PRIORITY 8600
RUEHDR/AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM PRIORITY 4702
RUEHDJ/AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI PRIORITY 4250
RUEHKM/AMEMBASSY KAMPALA PRIORITY 1413
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 1949
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 1925
RHMFISS/CJTF HOA PRIORITY
RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L NAIROBI 002616

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/13/2026

TAGS: [ASEC](#) [KDEM](#) [PREL](#) [KE](#)

SUBJECT: AIRPORT SECURITY INCIDENT LEADS TO EXPULSION OF
"ARMENIANS"

REF: A. NAIROBI 1187

[1](#)B. NAIROBI 1023

Classified By: Political Counselor Larry Andre. Rreasons 1.4
(b,d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Airport security is optional, for those with connections to high-level government officials and their associates. This point was underscored June 8 when two Armenian "mercenaries" (reftels) assaulted security officials at Kenya's main airport, waving firearms and bypassing inspections. Unlike the last time the two men dominated headlines, the Government of Kenya deported the Armenians the following day, declaring them personae non grata. "Too little too late" is the outcry from members of Parliament, the press, and the public, who demand to know why these men had been afforded protection from the highest officials, decrying what this reveals about the state of Kenyan national security. The troubling security lapse is a symptom of a government which has lost its way, allowing unsavory and possibly criminal activity to go on unchecked, with the hope of gaining some benefit or advantage of either the financial or political kind, or both. END SUMMARY.

PLAYBOY MERCENARIES REAPPEAR

[1](#)2. (SBU) "The Armenians," Artur Margaryan and Artur Sargsyan, first grabbed headlines in March when opposition politicians connected them to government raids on the Standard Media Group (ref B). Following accusations of their affiliations with prominent Kenyans, including individuals close to Statehouse, and speculation as to the true nature of their "business," the men reportedly left Kenya voluntarily in April. Popular opinion held that individuals high in the Kenyan government, or close to it, in particular Kibaki's second wife Mary Wambui, brought the Armenians to Kenya. It is unclear what exactly their activities in Kenya were, but they were most likely not entirely legal. Their lavish, flamboyant behavior and receipt of various privileges from the Government of Kenya drew widespread, unfavorable notice.

WHERE'S THE SECURITY?

[1](#)3. (SBU) On June 8, the Armenians burst into Jomo Kenyatta International Airport carrying highly-controlled (in theory) all-airport access passes, and flashing firearms which they used to threaten airport officials. A guest they had come to

meet had refused to pay duty on surveillance cameras she was importing. With their show of force, the Arturs were able to whisk their companion and her luggage past inspection. When police finally caught up with them and searched their home they found weapons, ammunition, Government of Kenya plated vehicles, Kenyan diplomatic passports, vehicle license plates, including diplomatic plates, police uniforms similar to the ones used during the March Standard raids, and bullet proof vests. Although the men were arrested on June 9, they were not held and charged, as would be appropriate for criminals, but instead deported (or expelled, as it is unclear if that formal deportation occurred). Kenyans are demanding an explanation for how the Arturs were able to so flagrantly violate Kenyan laws.

14. (SBU) During a June 13 special session to debate the issue, MPs highlighted the twin concerns of the serious security lapse which had allowed the Armenians to operate unimpeded, and "compromised" governance by officials who may have been supporting the duo for their own personal or political gain. Members underscored the real possibility that there are many more Arturs in Kenya, who, with support from influential individuals, are free to undertake drug trafficking, money laundering, counterfeiting, and gun running. That the Arturs were able to operate with impunity, they lamented, does not bode well for the country's ability to prevent international criminals from carrying out their activities in Kenya. Parliament's reaction is the brighter spot in this bizarre case. Assuming its role of providing a check on executive power, MPs pushed the Speaker to allow a special session, and informally called for a Parliamentary Select Committee to investigate in place of the executive-appointed Commission.

15. (C) The government insists it has done the right thing. Ministers highlight the arrest and removal of the Armenians

as well as President Kibaki's appointment of a Commission of Inquiry and suspension of eleven officials, including Criminal Investigations Department (CID) Director Joseph Kamau, as evidence of good intent. Internal Security Minister John Michuki, during his farewell meeting with the Ambassador June 14, insisted this was a case of "opposition politics," noting that the Government had waited until there was sufficient evidence to act, which it subsequently did. Michuki, however, remains characteristically unapologetic. Despite calls from MPs for his resignation, Michuki told the Ambassador, "I'm not going anywhere."

BRITISH HIGH COMMISSION SPEAKS OUT

16. (U) Nearly simultaneous with the June 13 debate in Parliament, the British High Commissioner in Nairobi was delivering his remarks in honor of the Queen's birthday. Coupled with a call for strong government action against grand corruption, Wood noted that the Armenians' departure (for which the government claims credit, he added) makes it harder for Kenyans to learn any answers. Highlighting the incident as part of a "wider, worrying trend," Wood commented that "it is important to Kenya's international partners that security at Kenya's airports should be robust." Wood concluded that the "excesses of the last few days...are too great to ignore."

COMMENT

17. (C) COMMENT: The Kibaki Government's reaction is classically formulaic: find a few scapegoats (the eleven suspended officials) and form a committee to investigate. Giving the Commission of Inquiry a distant deadline (July 31), the government can buy time while waiting for public memories to fade. If past experience with commissions and reports is any indication, (see the Goldenberg Report, Githongo Report on Anglo Leasing, etc.) legal action against any of the culprits is unlikely. Accountability is further

hamstrung by the release of the Armenians. The security lapse, itself deeply troubling, is symptomatic of a deeper malaise: a government which has lost its way and allows this kind of activity to go on under its nose (or with the connivance of its own members) in hopes of somehow benefiting from the criminal behavior committed by such dubious characters. END COMMENT.
BELLAMY